

Manfred Rommel visits Patch High School

Former lord mayor, son of 'Desert Fox'

Story & photo
by Johnathan Walker

Rows and rows of metal folding chairs, spaced like soldiers in formation, faced the small speaker's platform at the front of the Patch High School Media Center March 5.

Filling the first six rows of chairs sat nearly 40 cadets from the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps in dress uniform, a dozen other students, various teachers and guests – over 70 people in all.

Bob Gambert, a school staff member, called Rommel “a visionary who saw Germany how it was and who had a lot to do with where Stuttgart is today.”

Martha Drane, a history and government teacher, brought one of her classes to hear Rommel speak. She displayed an eager anticipation while clutching a photo of Rommel's father. “I'm going to ask him to autograph it.”

“[Rommel] was well known for his liberal attitude as mayor,” commented Ute Gambert, “I got to meet him once while on a ‘Meet the Mayor’ trip to Stuttgart. Today I feel very fortunate to see him again.”

Quietly the door opened and in stepped Dr. Manfred Rommel, son of German Field Marshal Irwin Rommel, the legendary “Desert Fox” of the North Africa campaign of World War II.

Historians contend that Irwin Rommel, a dedicated soldier, had knowledge of the unsuccessful plan to assassinate Hitler and was persuaded to commit suicide. Manfred Rommel was 16 years old at the time.

An accomplished author, poet, economist and long-time lord mayor of Stuttgart, Rommel does not live in the shadow of his famous father. He has written four books – two of them best sellers – as well as a regular column in a Stuttgart newspaper.

The soft-spoken Rommel shared his life story with the PHS audience, weaving tales of lessons learned throughout.

“I had the chance to join the Foreign Legion once,” he said, “but decided not to. I never joined the German army because there wasn't one.” Instead he chose to go into law. “As lawyers know everything, I built a lot of self-confidence,” he joked.

Rommel became a senior official in the Stuttgart city government at the age of 41, working primarily as a finance officer.

As he developed an interest in politics, his career propelled him to the office of lord mayor of Stuttgart, a position he held from 1974 to 1996. “After eight years as mayor things got fairly easy,” he said, “because people forget what you promised them when first elected – but then I didn't promise that much in the first place.”

Commenting on Iraq, Rommel said he fully supported President Bush but saw problems in the future.

“The desire is to change Iraq into a democracy like Germany and Japan were changed after World War II. However, Iraq is not the same, people there



Manfred Rommel, former Lord Mayor of Stuttgart and son of Germany's famous “Desert Fox,” addresses Patch High School students March 12 in the PHS media center.

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Jack Goldman
Patch High School JROTC

first have to embrace and trust a democratic system,” Rommel said.

He continued to give the audience a brief but fascinating glimpse of history, recalling his father as well as other prominent generals.

When asked what advice he would offer young people in the audience, Rommel said, “Cooperation between Germany and the U.S. has never been so important as today.” He added, “The great majority of Germans love Americans.”

Cadet Lt. Col. Zach Kell, JROTC battalion commander, presented Rommel with a plaque from the cadets and instructors of the 8th Battalion, thanking him for his visit.

Afterward, a small crowd formed around Rommel seeking his autograph on various items of memorabilia.

When asked about Rommel's remarks, CW4 Jack Goldman, JROTC senior Army instructor, said, “He's a very charming fellow with a fantastic sense of humor. This was a very unique opportunity for the cadets and I really feel, for most of them, this will be a very memorable experience.”

Goldman added, “There is no one more supportive of the U.S. in Germany than Dr. Rommel.”

Asked if there was a connection between Rommel and JROTC, Kell said, “Cadets make an annual trip to Erllingen, Germany, to participate in a memorial service for Rommel's father and to just pay their respects.”

Patch High School registration information

Who must register?

The following students must sign up for the 2003/2004 school year:

■ Students presently enrolled at Patch High School who will be returning next school year.

■ Sixth-grade students attending Böblingen Elementary School, Patch Elementary School and Robinson Barracks Elementary School who plan to attend Patch Junior High/High School as 7th graders next year.

The following situations also require notification:

■ Sponsors who are in doubt as to whether their dependents will be returning to Patch High School for school year 2003/2004 are advised to re-register them. If circumstances change, the registrar can be notified at the appropriate time.

■ Sponsors who know they will leave during the summer should let the registrar know this as soon as possible, so that all necessary records can be prepared.

Sponsors: It is extremely important that re-registrations be completed now so that the school can make adequate plans for the upcoming school year. Please be sure to fulfill this requirement during the dates and times in the box above.

PHS registration schedule

Where
Room 408
(near the guidance office)

When
March 28 and 31
April 1 and 2
(8 a.m to 1 p.m.)

What information is required?

For a completed registration, please provide the following:

1. Emergency contact person. This must be someone other than the spouse or sponsor, and must be provided within two weeks of the child's first day of school.
2. Student/sponsor's home phone number.
3. Sponsor's duty phone number.
4. Student/sponsor's military mailing address.
5. Student/sponsor's complete local quarters or German address.

What documents are required?

Military sponsors must verify that the orders on file with their child's registration are current for school year 2003/2004. If the orders on file expire before Sept. 1, 2003, extension orders must be provided.

If these are not available, the registrar will provide the spouse or sponsor with a form that can be verified by the relevant personnel office and returned to the registrar before the start of next school year.

All other categories of sponsors will be given the correct form to verify their status for school year 2003/2004.

Sponsors who provide a central billing letter should ask their agencies to provide them with one relevant to the 2003/2004 school year.

Spouses may complete the re-registration process in the absence of the sponsor.

Please be sure to bring a current ID card to re-registration.

What immunization records are required?

■ DPT series: 3 doses, at least one of which was administered after the 4th birthday. The last one must have been given within the past 10 years.

■ Hepatitis B: Three doses. This series must have been initiated.

■ MMR (measles, mumps and rubella): Two doses.

■ OPV (oral polio vaccine): Three doses, the last one administered after the 4th birthday.

■ Varicella: (chicken pox): One of the following – A history of the disease, one dose of varicella (for students up to age 12) or two doses of varicella administered at least one month apart (for students ages 13 and above).

Is bus re-registration necessary?

Yes, all students who will need to ride the school buses in school year 2003/2004 must be re-registered again with the school bus office.

A bus representative will be available on the registration dates.

For more information about the registration process contact Mrs. Hanks, Patch High School Registrar, at 430-7223/civ. 0711-680-7223.

For information about immunization requirements call 430-7257/civ. 0711-680-7257.